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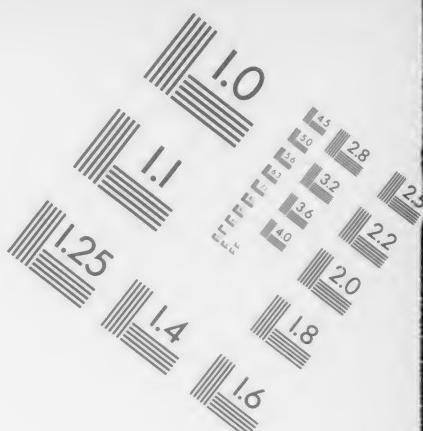
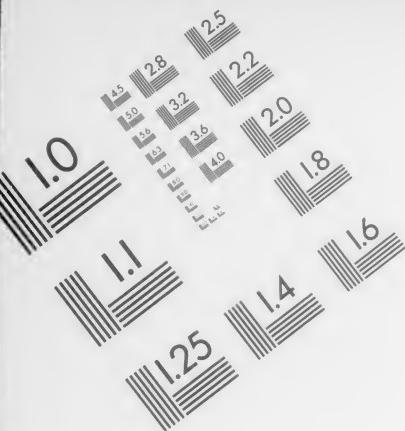
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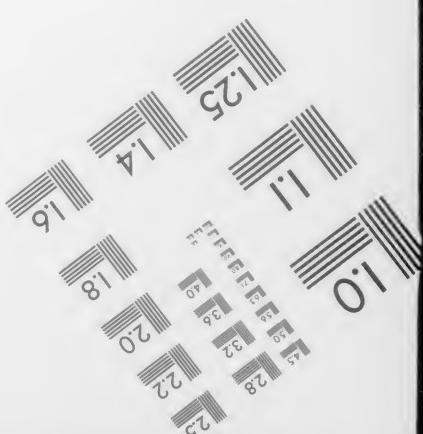
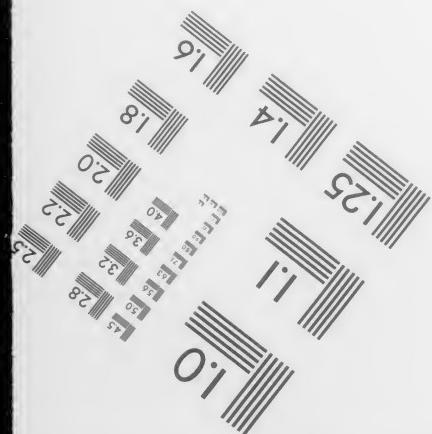
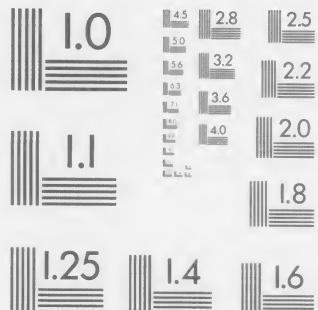
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ETHICAL LEAFLET.—No. 9.

MORALITY AND THE SUPERNATURAL.

THE Churches hold that we should do right in obedience to the will of a supernatural power, and that from our belief in and love of God we derive the highest incentive to right conduct.

We hold that we ought to require no incentive to right conduct other than the recognition of the supreme worth of such conduct to us, each and all, here, now, and in the future, and that what we ought to do in this world should be independent of any belief as to what may happen to us or may exist in another world.

Why do we hold this?

Because long centuries of experience have taught us that what we call evil is harmful both to the individual and society. It is because certain acts are harmful that we have learnt that it is right to avoid or suppress them. It is because certain other acts have proved beneficial that we call them good and judge it right to perform them.

We hold, then, that the good should be pursued because experience has shown that what we understand by that word does make for personal and social well-being.

What place, then, have we for supernatural incentives?

If a man judges that a certain course is the right one to follow, ought he to need some external incentive to make him do what he has already decided he ought to do? Surely not.

Again, if he judge that a certain course is to be avoided, is he to avoid it because it is the will of God? He avoids it because his judgment, based on all the experience available, is that evil would result. What other incentive should he want?

[P.T.O.]

MORALITY AND THE SUPERNATURAL

No doubt men do require incentives, such as hope of reward, here or hereafter, fear of public opinion, love of praise, and even fear of physical consequences, to make them pursue a course they see to be right. But *ought* they to? To require such incentives is surely a confession of failure—excusable, more or less, but still failure—in duty.

In seeking to free morality from dependence on the supernatural, we do not wish to have it thought that we under-estimate the importance of the great fundamental problems of our being. We simply affirm that whatever be a man's views as to the origin and ultimate purpose of the universe, whether they make him an optimist, a pessimist, or merely indifferent, he should not allow such views to determine his conduct in this life.

Whatever our beliefs about God or the next world, however and whenever they change, our duty to ourselves and our fellows in this world remains the same, and binding on us all alike.

And it is only when man realises that moral progress ever has been, and ever will be, the result of his own efforts that he will resolutely set his hands to the creation of a heaven here on earth.

Issued by the UNION OF ETHICAL SOCIETIES, 19, Buckingham Street, Strand, W.C. Corresponding Secretary, Miss F. Winterbottom, from whom further information about Ethical Societies can be obtained.

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